

CHRISTIAN ROCK CONCERT: AN EXERCISE IN DEPRAVITY

August 1, 2001 (Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061-0368, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org) - The following eye-witness report is by Brian Snider, who produces the Way of Life multi-media presentations. To view the photos that accompany this article, go to the following site: <http://www.wayoflife.org/misc/91lifest/>

The banks of speakers roared out jagged, black metal guitar chords as 16 to 20-something-year-old young men slammed against each other in front of the stage. Tattooed young women jiggled and shook their scantily-clad bodies as they took in the sounds of the music. Vendors hawked hemp bracelets and CDs and tapes of the artists on stage.

Body piercings in the tongue, nose, lips and navel, large tattoos and neon-colored hair set these young people apart as being peculiar, even in this day and age. Marilyn Manson fans? The fringe element of the death metal music scene? No, just a recent 'Christian' music concert at a Southern Baptist Church.

This scene took place June 23rd at Ridgecrest Baptist, an SBC Church in Oklahoma City. The concert was sponsored by KOKF, which plays alternative Christian rock in the Oklahoma City area, and was called the 91FM Livefest, though it could have just as easily been called 91FM Fleshfest.

Since the early 80s, contemporary Christian music (CCM) has been steadily broadening its appeal to include every musical style under the sun, no matter how raunchy, flamboyant or guttural. And with this opening of the floodgates to the world's music, has come a freefall into degradation for those who follow the 'music-is-neutral' philosophy. That degradation was shockingly apparent at the 91FM Livefest.

There was nothing outwardly apparent which could help someone determine if these were children of God or the blackest children of Satan, and that's the way these young people like it. They want to be undercover. We were repeatedly told, in very pointed terms, that Christians should become like the world around them to win the lost. If that includes looking like prostitutes, drug addicts, bikers and homosexuals, so be it.

"Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?"

This in spite of the fact that the scripture has much to say about moderation, modesty, self-control and the dangers of the world, the flesh and the devil. These young people use painfully misapplied scripture - "Judge not" primarily to justify anything and everything they want to do. The level of discernment is so low, that they do not realize that their favorite verse is actually a warning against hypocrisy, not a license to ignore and indulge evil. Scripture goes on to tell us to prove - or judge - everything, and to do so righteously. (1 Thess. 5:21; John 7:24; 1 Cor. 5:12; 1 Cor. 6:2).

The young people who attended this event became belligerent when the suggestion was made that the music, clothing and attitudes on display might not be pleasing to God. "How do you know what kind of music God listens to," one young lady blurted out, before making an obscene gesture with her finger. "Have you ever been to heaven to hear what kind of music he listens to?"

The night time disc jockey for KOKF was also vocal about the attitudes of these young people toward their music. He claimed to be born-again and delivered from the 'homosexual and hardcore scene', though he still wears black nail polish, eyeliner and a girl's hairdo. "If you tell these people that this music is of the devil....they will spit on you. You may praise God with your (hands in the air) but I praise God (with my fists)."

The 91FM Livefest featured 17 bands, many of which were hard-edged alternative bands. They included Bleach, Sparklepop, Justifide, The Shake, Radial Angel, Moonshine, Eleven Hours Down, Total Access, Sly's Alter Ego, Crowns Down, Dominique and Darius, Li'l Rascal, G-Boys, SubSeven, Drown Cru, Rainfall (Heaven's Rain), Embodiment, and Planet God. Music also included a 'rave' tent with a DJ playing, according to their promotional material 'your favorite dance/house/trance/trip-hop (music) all day long.'

"...are ye not carnal?"

But the 91FM Livefest wasn't all music. There was teaching, too. The philosophy behind Christian rock is that it is a good way to attract the lost, and then give them a gospel message. Most of the people we talked to at the agreed that this was the purpose of hard, Christian rock. The problem was, we didn't find anyone at the concert who didn't lay claim to already being saved. Nevertheless, the motley, half-naked crowd heard a vital message late in the afternoon by pastor Vern Marks of War Club Ministries. "Body Piercings & Tattoos - Is the Bible against it...or not?" Though we did not have an opportunity to hear his lesson, we did interview him later, and it quickly became apparent what he believes the Bible says about such things.

In addition to being some sort of pastor, Marks is the program director of FM91 and a promoter of the concert. He had a spike through his tongue, one through his lower lip, a ring in his nose and in one ear, and a tattoo on the side of his mohawk-shaven head. His associate pastor, who stood beside him during our interview, had shoulder length hair, combat boots and numerous tattoos exposed by his tank-top shirt.

Alternative music, whether secular or Christian, is a style of music that typically draws small but fervent crowds. That was the case at the Livefest. Though the crowd numbered only 200-300, they were actively involved in the goings-on, and by the time it got dark, they had been worked into an emotional frenzy by hour after hour of beat-laden music. There was a mosh pit in front of the stage where sweaty young men lunged into each other, elbowing and shoving, ranting and screaming with fists in the air. Some were hurt as they were slammed to the ground. After a few minutes rest, though, they generally jumped right back into the fray.

Most of the bands played harsh music with ominous chords and vocals that often were not sung but screamed at earsplitting levels. Only one word in dozens was understandable, yet each person interviewed said that the bands were playing and singing spiritual music that edified those in the audience. "I didn't understand a lot of what they said, but it's spiritual music," said one sweaty young man with arms draped across his girlfriend.

And the attendees generally believed that no matter how hard the music was, they had liberty to indulge in it. We asked several concert-goers how wild the music would have to get before they would consider it ungodly. Most were not willing to set any limits at all, as was the case with one blue haired boy, who couldn't have been more than 11 or 12 years old. "It could get as wild as anything," he said.

At the Rave Tent, young girls in skimpy shorts and low-cut tops bounced for hours to techno-style music typically played at raves, which in secular circles means all night dance parties where drugs and sex are prominent. Could the Christians in this crowd be far from the other activities that accompany these styles of music? Surely not.

Ridgecrest's youth pastor, John Lunsford, confessed that he didn't like the harder-edged music played toward the end of the evening, but he didn't feel that it was his place to speak against the concert since his pastor had welcomed the event to the church. Numerous calls to Ridgecrest pastor Tom Duckett were not returned.

This concert helps point out the problem with the SBC's claims of a conservative resurgence. The SBC may be conservative in some extraordinarily broad definition of the term, or when compared to most of the apostate denominations prominent today. But the denomination as a whole is worldly in the extreme and lacks the godliness befitting those who are consecrated to the service of Jesus Christ.

The leadership of a right-minded church would have pulled the plug on the Livefest after the first rotten notes were struck. Evangelism is what most of these young people needed, not more rock and roll.

"Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness...." Young people today have been deluded by the philosophy that all music is the same and that music has no values attached to it. Though, it is easy to see that music does have significance attached to it, and that rock and roll brings with it the world's attitudes, appearance and, ultimately, morals.

The philosophy of rock and roll Christianity, and of the young people attending this event, is that no outward change is necessary, but they fail to realize that an inward change invariably leads to an outward change.

“Luke 6:45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”

We heard time and again from those attending the Livefest that it does not matter how someone looks or what kind of music they listen to....all that matters is what is in the heart. In defending this attitude, one young man told us, "The Bible says 'Come as you are.'" When we pressed him for chapter and verse, he said, "I know it's in the Bible. My pastor says it all the time." The young people at this concert are like millions around the country today, who have a profession of Jesus Christ on their lips, or rather, a Jesus t-shirt on their backs, but who are unable or unwilling to see that following Christ means a cutting off of this world and its temporary pleasures and lusts.

And, even in the newly conservative SBC, there are always pastors who are lined up to lead them in the way they are clamoring to go.

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